

**The Cultural Collaborative:
A Community Plan for San Antonio's Creative Economy**

**TCC Community Forum
City Council Districts 3 and 4
July 6, 2004, 5:30-7:30 pm
Palo Alto College Performing Arts Building**

Discussion Notes

I. Opening Remarks

Jerry Allen, principal of Jerry Allen & Associates, and David Plettner, principal of The Cultural+Planning Group, gave the opening remarks. Office of Cultural Affairs Director, Felix Padrón, City Councilman District 3 Ron Segovia and City Councilman District 4 Richard Perez were in attendance and, also, gave brief introductions.

Jerry Allen presented an overview of the TCC process. TCC has nine focus areas:

- Advocacy and outreach
- Civic aesthetics
- Creative individuals
- Cultural equity
- Education
- Infrastructure/ ecosystem
- Neighborhood revitalization
- Resources
- Tourism

Allen concluded by inviting the audience to talk about the needs, issues, and short- and long-term goals for San Antonio's cultural community.

II. Participant Comments

The following comments are from the consulting team's notes, which were taken by hand and with a laptop computer. The forum was not recorded.

Comments focused on the status of the arts and cultural industry in San Antonio. It was mentioned that people are not spending money on art in this city. If they did, however, art and culture could be a viable revenue source. Reduction in investment will have negative impact on the city.

It was suggested that information proving the economic impact of investing in art be provided to San Antonio's City Council. Already underway, the City offices of Cultural Affairs and Economic Development have joined with Trinity University to study the art and cultural industry's economic impact on San Antonio.

The question was posed, why not spend time on local people? Cultural tourism marketing should also be done locally and the vitality of neighborhoods should be considered. Revitalizing neighborhoods would benefit all, however, tourists support the larger San Antonio economy.

III. Strategies

Major businesses should be induced to support arts and culture. Also, mid-sized, small, and local businesses should be involved. This will provide ownership. San Antonio has done a poor job of marketing our neighborhoods and promoting indigenous events, infrastructure, and resources. Resources are placed in “other than” art categories in this city.

Small arts businesses are burgeoning; galleries have developed in the last 15 years. We are not marketing local art, though; it is difficult for artists to market themselves. Instead of getting involved in the community of artists, artists feel competition.

Expectations are high and mentorship programs for children are key. San Antonio needs a plan for intergenerational education. It takes more than City money, also includes the community of artists and private sector. Education is needed and artists need to be treated respectfully.

IV. Solutions and Actions

With the example of the Dallas Cowboys, the city funded a percentage of their cost. Why not a project to fund art and art education? On the issues of arts and cultural education, ideas were purported that junior colleges and universities have the potential to require mandatory visits to art exhibits and write papers on exhibits and art. Palo Alto College offered the opportunity to use the campus more. The college employs 4,500 people who could be reached for the arts by bringing in art exhibits and using Palo Alto’s low cost leasing space.

For these ideas to work, coordination is needed. Also, a communications vehicle to develop a contact list for on-going communication is important and, the city needs a directory of artistic events and programs. The city has no defined “soul” because of the fragmented community and lack of collaboration. The city lacks pride, mainly because of the emphasis on tourism.

Mandatory neighborhood associations are another opportunity to get involved. Through the Neighborhood Resource Center, people could educate through the arts. This needs to be a long-term plan. With arts education, anyone can relate to the arts and San Antonio can develop an audience. It should be explored how other scholastic departments can incorporate art into the school’s curriculum. A workshop for teachers was also mentioned. OCA was suggested as an office to lead the development of these workshops.

San Antonio's media doesn't focus on local art or only portrays the negatives, i.e. the First Friday alcohol issue. Culture needs to be separated from the arts. San Antonio needs a functioning business model, though in the past they had this.

Increased competition for audiences and the public's time has lead the cultural industry to need greater exposure and a better-coordinated effort. Flores Street is a hub of creative resources because interest is there and the proximity to an elementary school.

More information is needed. How do we convey message and express ourselves?

On the issue of collaboration, it was suggested that there be a signage project at Palo Alto, Our Lady of the Lake University, UTSA working with college students. There also needs to be collaboration between the arts, education services and business. This should be done through creating multiple points of entry and opportunities (example: Jr. high, high school). Through TCC, we should replicate successful models and engage more people.

On the issue of profitability, it was suggested that there must be an emphasis on communication and efforts should be long-lived and time-tested. Regarding human capital, there must be a paradigm shift in this community. TCC should use templates that work in other cities and educate City Council on arts issues. Homeowner associations should be involved because City Council will listen to them. People should encourage commissioning local artists, particularly in parks and design.